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21 July 2011

The Visual Ranking Tool by Intel promotes students’ use of critical thinking by asking them to judge, order, and rank items in a list. Students work in groups, discussing in what order the list should be ranked. The nature of this activity requires students to use logic and reasoning to support their arguments, possibly needing to persuade other students in their group. Of course there is no right or wrong answer, but it causes the students to make use of their knowledge by evaluating and placing a judgment on it.

To use this tool, the teacher first comes up with a question. An example might be, “Who were the most important figures during the American Revolution?” The teacher then creates a list of up to 16 items to be ranked in order of importance (George Washington, Paul Revere, Betsy Ross). Any student can quickly rank these items, but by using the comments feature they can show their knowledge by listing justifications for their rankings. Intel also suggests that students help in coming up with ideas for an initial unranked list. The teacher then uses the tool to create assigned or student-chosen teams, complete with name and password. The teacher is able to leave comments, compare team results, and view how the entire class ranked the items on average.

I have given a lot of thought as to how I could use this tool in teaching French, or any foreign language. I feel that there is little in language that is subjective enough to place a ranking on. What I have come up with is that students could provide me with feedback by ranking what activities and units they most enjoyed or which units were most difficult. This would help me in improving lesson plans and curriculum; however I feel this could just as easily be accomplished in a teacher evaluation. This tool could be used more easily in cultural units, such as ranking the most influential artists in the French Impressionist movement. Students would not only need to become familiar with the work of multiple artists, but they would also need to think about how they influenced the movement and one another through comparing similarities in the artwork. For some additional fun, students could also rank their favorite Impressionist painters.